

Activities

For more about a whole-school approach

Read pp. 33-38 of *Focus on literacy: Writing* and consider the following questions:

- What improvements do we want to make in our whole-school planning?
- In what ways could we use the school's resources in order to improve the teaching of writing?
- What strategies can we use to extend talented writers?
- What strategies can we use to help writers experiencing difficulties?
- How can we take advantage of different language backgrounds as a way of enriching the teaching of writing?

For more about assessing writing

Read pp. 39-41 of *Focus on literacy: Writing* and consider the following questions:

- What are our current strategies for assessing writing? Do we need to improve them?
- What should we assess? When? How?
- How can we ensure that we assess writing at the levels of whole text, sentence and word?

For more about resources for teaching writing

Skim pp. 42-50 of *Focus on literacy: Writing* and consider the following questions:

- Which resources listed in the bibliography would further guide our teaching of writing?
- What strategies could we use to share information about the teaching of writing?

Working with

Focus on literacy: Writing



Introduction

Focus on literacy: Writing contains information for primary and secondary teachers on the teaching of writing in all subjects.

This brochure provides training and development activities to enable teachers to make the best use of *Focus on literacy: Writing* and teach writing effectively.

Activities 1 and 2 should be completed before any others. The information from these activities will direct participants to activity 3, in which decisions can be made about which of the remaining training and development activities will best suit participants' needs.

These activities address the professional development needs of teachers and can be used in a number of ways:

- at school level, to address focus areas identified in a whole-school literacy plan
- by faculty or stage groups of teachers
- by individual teachers.

I. What are our current understandings about writing in all subjects?

At a staff or faculty meeting, discuss and collate staff information and opinions about the following:

Understanding about writing

What is my understanding about writing?

Difficulties with writing

What causes the difficulties that some students have in writing well?

Current practices

What are my current practices in teaching writing?
Why do I teach writing in this way?

Concerns

What are my main concerns about the teaching of writing?

What are my main concerns about my students' competence in writing?

Keep a record of the issues and concerns which arise out of this activity. This record, combined with the findings from activity 2, will help you in the choice of further activities.

3. What can we do to find out more about the issues raised in activities 1 and 2?

If you wrote mainly 4s and 5s in activity 2, you should feel quite confident in implementing *Focus on literacy: Writing*.

If you would like to investigate some issues further, use the list below as a guide.

2. How familiar are we with teaching writing in all subjects?

Number the boxes beside each question, using a scale where:

- 5 = I understand this and how it assists a student's competence in writing
- 1 = This is totally unfamiliar to me.

A social view of writing

☐ I understand how a social view of writing prepares students to write for academic and community purposes.

What to teach

☐ I understand the balance required in teaching students to write for a range of purposes. This balance includes composition of texts, processes in developing writing and presentation of texts.

How to teach writing

☐ I understand what the explicit teaching of writing requires of me as a teacher. I understand how to design modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies.

Whole-school approach

☐ I understand my role in supporting a whole-school approach to the teaching of writing. I participate in stage or faculty planning sessions to discuss resources, teachers' knowledge and students' achievements in writing and I confidently address the needs of different learners in my class.

Assessing writing

☐ I am confident in assessing students' writing at text level, sentence level and word level.

Resources for teaching writing

☐ I am familiar with the policy statements and documents of the Department of Education and Training which guide the teaching of writing. I am also familiar with syllabus documents and support material from the Board of Studies that guide the teaching of writing.

For more about a social view of writing

Read pp. 12-20 of *Focus on literacy: Writing* and consider the following questions:

- What is a social view of writing?
- Why do we need to emphasise purpose when we teach writing?
- What are the advantages of a social view of writing?
- What are the implications for our teaching?
- How can we achieve more emphasis on social purposes when we teach writing?

For more about what to teach

Read pp. 21-25 of *Focus on literacy: Writing* and consider the following questions:

- What makes a text effective?
- In our current practices, how do we address writing at the level of whole text, sentence, word and surface features?
- How should we address the processes of writing?

For more about how to teach writing

Read pp. 26-32 of *Focus on literacy: Writing* and consider the following questions:

- How can we incorporate into our teaching the elements of explicit teaching listed on pp. 26-27?
- What are the implications for our school of the systematic teaching of writing?
- What is our understanding of modelled, guided and independent teaching of writing?